



# RURAL ADVOCATE

Winter 2003

## Improving Rural Arkansas:

**T**he Town of Etowah at Mississippi County, population 366, received its first Rural Community Development Grant in 1999 for a project involving a triangular area of land, donated by citizen Elwanda Sharp, to be used a Town Square. The \$4,500 project, including a 50% match of local funds, in-kind labor and the invested time of local citizens, involved the inclusion of park benches, flag poles, lights, trees, planter and a sign welcoming all who pass.

"This was our first real fiscal grant. This grant gave our town a pride in

that this was one of the first activities that showed progress in the community since we had incorporated in 1996," says Etowah Mayor Charles McCollum. "Until the city took ownership of the property it had not been maintained. It was unsightly but we cleaned it up, poured sidewalks, and added trees and grass. Our community is now very proud on this center point in town."

The town received another Rural Community Grant Program award in the spring of this year for construction of a pavilion for the City Park. While Etowah had received a

Department of Parks and Tourism Fun Park grant in 2000, the specifications for it did not include a pavilion for citizens to gather for picnics, birthdays, family reunions and other city functions.

"Mr. Tommy Goldsby offered our Town \$15,000.00 to help with the construction of the pavilion. We took this offer and filed for a Rural Services Grant to match this amount. The total amount needed was over \$32,000.00. Once the grant was awarded in June we started work on the project in late July

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## From ARDC Chair and DRS Director

**T**he Arkansas Rural Development Commission and Department of Rural Services are very happy to report another successful year in our efforts to serve citizens in communities of under 3,000 in population. Despite tough economic times we were able, thanks to the support of Governor Huckabee and the Arkansas General Assembly, to sustain adequate funding levels to support rural fire departments, community centers, county fairs and much more. We have fielded hundreds of calls for local assistance up to the 20,000 population level and tried our best to either meet those needs or direct those inquiries to the proper state or federal entities. We are also proud to have aided the efforts of the Arkansas Delta Commission in recommending to the Governor hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal grant money to help some of our most depressed areas. The most important thing we would like to do is thank you for all you do as county and city officials, legislators, rural firefighters and volunteers in rural Arkansas. We want to truly congratulate you on all you do and offer any assistance you might need. We believe we have the most cohesive hard-working commission and staff in government. We always endeavor to treat folks in the way we would like to be treated. It's not original, it's called the Golden Rule. Happy Holidays and a very merry Christmas from all of us.



Rhonda Davis  
ARDC Chair



Bruce Campbell  
DRS Director

## Arkansas Rural Development Commission

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## Etowah (Continued)

(Continued from page 1)

2003. We completed most of the work on the pavilion that September."

Currently awaiting a sewer project to hook up restroom services that should be completed sometime in the summer of 2005, the community has conducted several fundraisers to pay for electrically work on the pavilion. The Town has also received two Rural Services Block Grants, one in 2000 for \$60,810 for construction of a fire station and \$50,000 in June of this year for the purchase of a pumper truck.

"Our community has been fortunate over the last seven years. But two of the most positive projects that can be physically seen are the Triangle and the Pavilion," says McCollum. "Both of these projects have given our community a sense of pride and accomplishment. The Department of Rural Services programs are good for small communities and very worthwhile. I would just like to thank the department and staff on behalf of the Town of Etowah for the benefits we receive each day by the projects Rural Services has funded."



The Triangle: Etowah's Town Square

## Faith-Based Resources

- School of the 21st Century grants of \$150,000 each are available to churches or faith-based groups that have or want to start after-school programs. This can include tutoring, mentoring, or other after-school programs. For information, contact Dee Cox of the Arkansas Department of Education at 501-682-4379. The grant cycle will began in May, 2003, but faith-based organizations can request the guidelines at any time and begin establishing partnerships with local schools and community groups. They can use this time to become a 501(c)(3), if they are not already. The grant allows the faith-based group to be its own fiscal agent. An overview of the program is given at [http://www.teacoalitions.net/school\\_of\\_the\\_21st\\_century\\_progr%20overview.htm](http://www.teacoalitions.net/school_of_the_21st_century_progr%20overview.htm)
- Faith-based organizations are invited to apply for \$10,000 grants from the Arkansas Department of Education, which has received funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service for the School-Based Learn and Serve America Program. Organizations do not have to have a 501(c)(3) to qualify. They can be their own fiscal agent if they partner with a school. For information, contact Brazierdene Watts of the Arkansas Department of Education at (501) 682-5615 or by e-mail at [bwatts@arkedu.k12.ar.us](mailto:bwatts@arkedu.k12.ar.us) Learn and Serve America supports service-learning programs in schools and community organizations throughout the nation. This program combines service to the community with student learning in a way that improves both the student and the community. Students can earn high school course credit for community service. Visit this website, [http://arkedu.state.ar.us/whats\\_new/whats\\_new\\_p8.htm](http://arkedu.state.ar.us/whats_new/whats_new_p8.htm), for additional information.

- Faith in Action Grants Available:

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation's largest philanthropy dedicated exclusively to health and health care, today announced its biggest commitment of funds ever – a record \$100 million -- to triple the size of its 19-year national *Faith in Action* program. *Faith in Action* is a national program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. It makes grants to local groups of volunteers representing many faiths, who work together to care for their neighbors who are chronically ill, frail, elderly or disabled. *Faith in Action* volunteers come from churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship, as well as the community at large. They help those in need with many everyday activities, such as picking up a few groceries or providing a ride to the doctor. For additional information visit the Faith in Action website, <http://www.fiavolunteers.org/index.cfm>



## Rural Community Grant Program Fiscal Year 2004 Cycle I Grant Recipients

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Almyra	Arkansas	Fire Protection	\$4,804.00
Bear Creek	Searcy	Community Development	\$6,021.00
Buckner	Lafayette	Community Development	\$3,905.00
Cherry Hill	Perry	Fire Protection	\$14,079.00
Cincinnati	Washington	Fire Protection	\$15,000.00
Cotter	Baxter	Fire Protection	\$15,000.00
Cove	Polk	Fire Protection	\$15,000.00
Diamond City	Boone	Community Development	\$2,557.00
Diaz	Jackson	Community Development	\$1,589.00
Egypt	Craighead	Fire Protection	\$3,000.00
Formosa	Van Buren	Community Development	\$15,000.00
Horatio	Sevier	Community Development	\$8,250.00
Lacey/Ladelle	Drew	Fire Protection	\$14,891.00
Oak Hill	Little River	Fire Protection	\$4,412.00
Pine Ridge	Montgomery	Fire Protection	\$15,000.00
Turner	Crawford	Community Development	\$12,639.00
Wooster	Faulkner	Community Development	\$15,000.00
<b>Total:</b>			<b>\$166,147</b>

## County Fair Building Grant Fiscal Year 2004 Recipients

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Arkansas County Fair Association	Arkansas	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
Carroll County Fair Association	Carroll	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
Cleveland County Fair Association	Cleveland	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
Izard County Fair Association	Izard	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
Johnson County Fair Association	Johnson	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
Lonoke County Fair Association	Lonoke	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
Mississippi County Fair Association	Mississippi	County Fair Building	\$2,583.00
Newton County Fair Association	Newton	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
Prairie County Fair Association	Prairie	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
Sevier County Fair Association	Sevier	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
Van Buren County Fair Association	Van Buren	County Fair Building	\$4,000.00
<b>Total:</b>			<b>\$42,583</b>

**Dates  
To  
Remember**

**Rural Community Grant Program**

**Cycle II: December 19, 2003**

**Cycle III: March 26, 2004**

**Rural Services Block Grant Program**

**FY04: December 19, 2003**

## DEPARTMENT OF RURAL SERVICES

101 E. Capitol, Ste. 202  
Little Rock, AR 72201

Phone: 888-787-2527  
Fax: 501-682-6014  
Email: ruralar@gte.net

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### DRS Staff

Bruce Campbell  
Director

Amy Gunnett  
Assistant Director

Jean Noble  
Grants Coordinator

Lauren Britton  
Grants Coordinator

Stephanie Gueck  
Administrative Assistant

**“Striving to Enhance the Quality of Life in Rural Arkansas”**

## A Very Merry Christmas from our Commission & Staff

### Country Christmas

Christmas in the country is a different sort'a thing.  
A quiet, peaceful, solitude, that nature seems to bring.

Yet, some folks from the city feel sad we miss so much.  
Tinsel town mall muffin's think: We're really out of touch!

No decorated streets to flaunt the merchants floats paradin'.  
No helicoptored Santa's land to sirens serenadin'.

Far removed from distant crowds of noisy people shoppin',  
scramblin' hard to outdo friends, must really keep'em hoppin'.

We have no crowded shopping malls chuck full'a plastic toys.  
No bands a tootin' Christmas songs that get lost in the noise.

The curried groves of pine and spruce that crowd each vacant space,  
designer colors coat the boughs and take away their grace!

I'm givin' thought to such as this as we come 'round the bend,  
the team now breaks into a trot as they see journey's end.

With full moon just a peekin' o'er the mountains to the east,  
its light careens off snow clad trees and gives our eyes a feast.

Beside me in the bobsleigh, is a Christmas tree a ridin',  
and faces framed by fur trimmed caps are laughin' as we're glidin'.

Just up ahead, a cabin's light, smoke curlin' from its stack.  
A cheery voice is callin' out--"So glad to see you're back!"

Aroma of good things to eat, a driftin' out our way,  
makes us want to hurry as we feed the team their hay.

We finish chores, then take the tree, into the house for Mom to see--  
We knew that she would tell our Dad: "Prettiest tree we've ever had!"

Christmas morning! What a sight! Not much sleepin' here last night.  
Grandfolks made it through the drifts, family fun, exchange of gifts.

We told our stories, laughed at Dad, best Christmas that we've ever had!  
At Christmas time don't pity me--*This is what they all should be!!*

*Sam Jackson*